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Tim J. McConnell and Andrea K. Rorrer

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What is This?

Professional Behavior

Crossing the Line

Tim J. McConnell

Park City School District

Andrea K. Rorrer

University of Utah

This case, which was inspired by actual events, describes the efforts of a district to create a culture of accountability for professional employee practice and behavior.¹ In the midst of new district leaders and a shift in district priorities, numerous situations test the fortitude, organizational knowledge, ethical commitments, and political prowess of the district leadership. As the case unfolds, there are opportunities for students in an educational leadership preparation program to explore the political, legal, ethical, and organizational change dimensions of district leadership, particularly around areas of human resource and supervision. In doing so, the case illustrates the importance of inter- and intra-personal dynamics of leadership, particularly leadership during transition.

Keywords: *district leadership and policy; educator misconduct; human resource and supervision*

Case Narrative

The newly appointed Director of Personnel, Jon Robertson, sat in Superintendent Teri Chambers' office at the end of the day on Friday as was common over the course of Jon's 3-month tenure as the newest member of the district leadership team. These meetings served multiple purposes. First, though these meetings were largely informal, they were part of his acculturation to the central office. Next, they were also an opportunity to discuss personnel policy issues and district politics. When Jon was hired, he had no previous human resources experience and the school board was skeptical that Jon's experience was sufficient to fill the role. So these meetings also provided an opportunity for Dr. Chambers to mentor Jon. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Friday meetings allowed time for Jon and Superintendent Chambers to debrief and talk about the process of changing both the culture and practice of how the district would hold employees accountable for professional misconduct.

The conversation on this particular Friday in mid-August was focused on Monday's meeting with principals, assistant principals, and classified employee supervisors. This staff meeting was set to address two issues. First, the superintendent would discuss a state-level report on job actions issued recently by the State

Professional Practices Commission. The commission's report identified Alexandra as the only school district in the entire state that did not have a single referral for inappropriate or unprofessional behavior of a certificated employee to the State Professional Practices Advisory Council in the past 22 years. Despite the commission's report, concerns and criticism at the district level and across the county have heightened regarding employee professional practice, and an oft-cited lack of judgment among district faculty and staff. The most pronounced criticisms in recent years include the district's failure to address poor performing teachers, nepotism in hiring, and protection of veteran teachers who exhibit unprofessional and unlawful behaviors. Again, these (un)professional behaviors are among the highest priority issues for the newly hired superintendent and her leadership team, including the new human resource director. The state commission's report was an opportunity for the superintendent to address the second issue of Monday's administrative meeting—a presentation on a process for addressing inappropriate employee behavior. The superintendent and Jon had developed the process over the summer so that it could be presented in conjunction with the release of the report.

After spending most of her first 2 years focused on improving instructional practices at the classroom level, the superintendent's top item in the agenda for the upcoming school year was to raise school building and program supervisors' awareness of, and focus on, accountability for professional behavior. The information in the commission's report, though damaging, was also timely. As Dr. Chambers said to Jon 2 months earlier,

The question of a high-profile personnel case occurring isn't a matter of if, but when. Employees will walk through your door and present you with information that will have to be investigated. At some point, the stakes of the outcome of the investigation will be high, possibly leading to terminating someone's contract and perhaps resulting in criminal prosecution. You and the administrator have to be prepared and understand how to work together to ensure a thorough investigation and a fair outcome.

This point was emphasized by the *Fairview Herald-Tribune*, a local newspaper, which recently ran an article on local and national reports about educator sexual misconduct and raised the question about its existence in local districts. The *Herald-Tribune* reported that in the previous school year, there had been three disturbing reports of sexual misconduct on the part of school teachers from three different school districts surrounding the state's largest metropolitan area. Most disturbing was that two of the three cases involved alleged sexual misconduct with elementary-age students—one by a male teacher with female students and one by a female teacher with a male student. The article also reviewed three of the more notorious cases of educator misconduct involving Mary Kay Letourneau, Pamela Rogers Turner, and Debra Lafave, all of whom became “romantically” involved with school-age students.

From the perspective of some members of the Alexandra community, including three of the seven school board members, the information in the state report was not only laudable, but a tribute to the quality of the employees that had worked in the school district over the past two decades. For many, a report of no disciplinary referrals to the state commission meant that none had been necessary. Conversely, other members of the board, district employees, as well as a growing segment of the public viewed the commission's report from a different perspective. And rather than providing comfort, the report increased frustration and tension over the previous administration's unwillingness to take on the "old guard" and to use "discount and defend" as their strategy for inappropriate employee conduct and poor teaching practices.

In fact, growing knowledge and public discussion of teachers who had not kept up with current best practice with no apparent consequences, a small but powerful contingent of teachers and coaches whose verbal tirades during classes or team practices were downplayed and rarely resulted in anything beyond a verbal warning, and rumors of personal relationships between teachers and students outside of school fueled the dissonance around the report's findings. In addition to these issues, there was an alleged incident with a teacher from the "old guard" shoving a student into a set of lockers during an argument. Because no one witnessed the altercation, the matter was not pursued by administrators. The continued practice of hiring relatives and friends of district employees over more qualified applicants, especially in classified positions such as secretaries, teaching assistants, maintenance workers, and custodians only intensified public skepticism of district ethics. From the perspective of dissatisfied patrons, employees, and board members, and the superintendent, the information from the commission's report was a catalyst for critical review of district practices and action that was long overdue.

A District Divided

Alexandra School District is located 90 minutes south of the state's major metropolitan area and state capital. Alexandra and Fairview are the two primary population areas. Each town supports a feeder network of two middle schools and four elementary schools to one public high school. After 20 years of steady growth, the student population in Alexandra School District has held steady for 3 years at just more than 9,000 students. Alexandra High enrollment is typically around 1,400 students, whereas Fairview's enrollment is around 1,300.

The split in opinions about the information in the state commission report on the part of the school board and patrons also reflected the longstanding divisiveness between constituent groups on the east and west side of Alexandra County. Similar to many districts nationwide that are split by a river, railroad, or roadway, Alexandra School District is divided geographically, economically, and racially, by north and south running freeway. Moreover, politically it is divided because the town of Alexandra is the county seat. For the west side residents in and around Fairview, this

was viewed as an advantage for Alexandra because such things as community improvement projects, road construction, and repair and zoning ordinances seemed to occur either first or to the advantage of Alexandra.

Accusations of favoritism on behalf of the school board toward the east side schools, including Alexandra High School, were also frequently levied when school board decisions resulted in perceived or real inequitable treatment of Fairview and its schools. Due to the size of the precincts in Alexandra County, four of the school board members represented the east side of the school district. For instance, when a new east-side elementary school and major reconstruction project for Alexandra High School was approved by a split vote of the school board 4 years earlier, the Fairview residents protested vehemently that Fairview High School was in greater need for an upgrade and that their elementary schools were equally as crowded as the east-side elementary schools. When the district could not financially support two distance learning sites, Alexandra High School received the studio for students to participate in the state education network classes. As a result, Fairview High School students had to drive to Alexandra to take classes not offered at their high school such as aviation science, criminal justice, Chinese, and anatomy and physiology.

The high schools, which have similarly sized student enrollment, also compete in the same region of the state for academic and athletic competitions. Invariably, Fairview most often finishes a close second to Alexandra in activities such as debate, academic decathlon, and “mathletes.” In athletics, the two schools remain bitter rivals. Each school consistently vies for region and state dominance in football, track and field, girls’ basketball, and especially wrestling. For example, either Fairview or Alexandra High School has won the last 10 state wrestling championships. The two schools’ dominance over the rest of the high schools in their state division defied explanation. Despite the intense rivalry, the schools’ success in this area was a source of extreme community pride.

The Superintendent: A Time for New Leadership

Dr. Teri Chambers had been recruited to apply for the Alexandra School District superintendent position when the former superintendent, Dr. Edgar Booker, announced his retirement a little over 3 years ago. After a national search produced three finalists, Dr. Chambers was appointed to the position with almost unanimous support from the hiring committee as well as the school board.

Dr. Chambers had worked previously for Montgomery School District, which was considered to be one of the state’s most progressive districts. She was recruited, in part, based on her success as an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, whose role focused on improving student performance in Title I designated schools. Dr. Chambers was a self-described “thief” of successful instructional strategies. As she stated in a radio interview during the superintendent search process,

I look for award winning overachieving schools in cities with similar demographics to ours [Montgomery School District's]. Then, I take the principals and teacher leaders from our highly impacted schools so they see what these schools do differently than we do, and then we replicate the model. The principals, teachers, and staff 'get on board or go elsewhere'. From my perspective, there isn't time or justification to support one minute of ineffective instruction for our students.

In collaboration with district staff and partner agencies, Dr. Chambers' developed a plan to scale up the district's early literacy programs, supplemental instruction, use of instructional technology in the classroom, and middle school math and reading initiatives while expanding its in-home and summer instructional programs. Over her tenure in the district, the district became a nationally recognized for increases in student academic performance as well as closing achievement gaps. As a result, the district met the requirements of No Child Left Behind, including meeting annual yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks. Due to lagging performance in Alexandra public schools, these initiatives combined with positive results were enough of an incentive to recruit Dr. Chambers.

Additional reasons for recruiting and hiring Dr. Chambers from the school board's perspective included her 12 years of experience as a building principal at both elementary and secondary schools, 2 years as the assistant to the director of personnel, and 4 years as the director of personnel for Montgomery. During her tenure in personnel, Montgomery County School District had successfully terminated eight teachers and an assistant principal for indiscretions ranging from incompetence and insubordination to inappropriate use of school funds and unprofessional conduct.

Securing the services of an individual committed to addressing the stagnant student performance in Alexandra School District, while also bringing to the table the acumen to understand the steps necessary to increase accountability of the district administrative staff for the behavior of their employees, was considered an incredible coup by the school board and the public. For a board so divided, getting support from six of the seven board members for Dr. Chambers as the number one choice for superintendent was almost a miracle.

Unbeknownst to the school board, Dr. Chambers had had an eye on Alexandra School District for several years. She wanted to become a superintendent, but not in a school district the size of Montgomery County (40,000 students). She was impressed with several of the board members she had met through the state school board association meetings. Teri also felt like the improvement potential for students in the district was something she could guide and facilitate successfully.

Dr. Chambers had 6 years left until being fully vested in the state retirement system. She intended that Alexandra School District would be the job that she stayed in until she felt that her love for education or her intense energy to work toward improvement of the system for students and staff waned. As she stated decisively in her interviews, a "6-year minimum" is what the board could expect from her. If all worked out, her goal was to stay in the district for 10 years then retire.

Teri had been methodical in her approach to addressing critical issues in Alexandra district. She had made a decision early on that there would be a sequential approach to addressing the district's primary issues, three of which were out-of-date teaching practices, stagnant academic performance, and the achievement gap between high-performing Anglo students, students of color, students eligible for free and reduced lunch, and second-language learners.

Together, the board and the superintendent set their programmatic priorities as all-day kindergarten for identified students, state and federal grants to support K-3 reading initiatives through additional staff, and after-school and summer programs. Her vision and motto, "In Order to Arrive We Read by Five," propelled a project that brought together the district education foundation, PTA, PTO, and community education resources. This project made significant inroads toward focusing the district's early childhood and kindergarten programs and were already leading to increases in students' literacy skills and preparedness for first grade. Additionally, in an effort to emphasize the Pk-12 implications of reform efforts, a cadre of younger energetic middle and high school core-subject-area teachers had caught fire with training on differentiating instruction, vertical alignment of the coursework, and incorporating instructional strategies for second-language learners into their instruction.

While the board and the community could readily see evidence of a shift in the academic emphasis, little had changed with regard to the perception of issues around employee behavior. Ineffective teaching, arriving late or leaving early, and failing to post grades for homework and tests on the student information system in a timely manner were intermittent, but still problematic. As many of the principals, department chairs, and grade-level team leaders began to spur the momentum on some of the curricular and instructional initiatives, Dr. Chambers' attention turned toward developing a system of support for district administrators to help them address inappropriate employee behaviors. She was determined to move forward with this priority despite a track record of a lack of support for the principals from the current personnel director.

Opportunity Knocks: A Computer Glitch

From Dr. Chambers' perspective, an ironic, yet somewhat fortuitous and timely turn of events occurred toward the end of her third year as superintendent in Alexandra School District. During a recent planning meeting on district staffing projections, the then current personnel director, Todd McLaughlin, who was part of the meeting, developed a problem with the disk drive in his laptop that was provided to him by, and property of, the school district. Mr. McLaughlin had been the personnel director for Alexandra School District for 22 years. Dr. Chambers immediately summoned the new technology specialist to repair the laptop. After running a few diagnostics, the

specialist informed Dr. Chambers and Mr. McLaughlin that the repairs would take an additional day. During the laptop repair, the specialist performed his routine installations and system updates on Mr. McLaughlin's computer. In doing so, two electronic files that were deleted but still on the hard drive was found. The files contained over a hundred graphic picture downloads from websites and a spreadsheet tracking results from betting on college football, including dollar amounts, winnings, and losses; both are contrary to the district's technology *Acceptable Use Agreement*. District procedures required the specialist to report the findings to the district technology director, human resource director, and superintendent.

Faced with the prospect of a full investigation, possible disciplinary action, and publicity, Mr. McLaughlin resigned. He immediately moved from Alexandra County in the northern part of the state to provide care for an ailing aunt who raised him after his mother and father had passed away. An interesting note for those who were closest to Todd, he once mentioned that neither his late father nor mother had had any siblings.

Case Analysis Questions

Section 1

1. School districts seek administrators that demonstrate leadership qualities. What skills and attributes does Dr. Chambers possess that reflect basic leadership qualities and principles? How are the superintendent's vision and goals for Alexandra School District manifested in her actions? From your experience in education, who have you worked with/for who you consider an excellent leader? What made them an effective leader?
2. Review and compare across sites the current Internet/computer-use agreements for students and employees in your school district/organization (e.g., elements, requirements, terms of agreement, duration of agreement). For school districts, which is stricter regarding violations—the student agreement or the employee agreement and how do they differ? Compare and contrast computer/Internet-use agreements across districts and/or with university policies.
3. Depending on their level of access and skill, information technology specialists have almost instantaneous access to electronic information stored in the district and on district-issued technology. What ethical and professional standards are codified in your district based on their access and availability to sensitive information? If a concern were brought to you as a supervisor over what an employee saw on another employee's computer, what procedures are you required to follow to access and/or report this information? In addition, if incriminating information is discovered, what procedures must be followed according to district, local, or state laws?
4. With regard to the personnel director's retirement/resignation, what are the legal issues that require the superintendent to inform local law enforcement of the information discovered on the computer? What action(s) could have been pursued

against the personnel director had he decided to stay in his position and fight the issues about what was on his computer? Despite the resignation, what would be the requirements for referring the previous personnel director to the professional practices commission or similar agency in your district/state?

5. Given the culture of the district, what are the organizational implications of the district, in this case, not pressing charges and instead accepting the resignation of the human resource director?
6. Based on what you know thus far about the history/context of the district, what are the political implications of change generally and changes to address academic achievement and inappropriate professional behavior specifically.

A New Hire and a Call to Action

Dr. Chambers was faced with a critical and perhaps defining decision based on unexpected resignation of veteran personnel director Todd McLaughlin. From a surprisingly small pool of applicants, Dr. Chambers and the school board deliberated between two finalists for the personnel director's position. The decision revolved around whether it would be better to hire someone from outside the district for a fresh start, particularly given the current reputation of the district, or whether they should hire an insider who was a current principal, Jon Robertson, in the district. The external candidate had 2 years of experience as a human resource director in a nearby state. Aside from general staff selection and evaluation duties associated with his role as principal, Mr. Robertson, however, had no formal human resource experience. Though the selection committee was sensitive to the district's reputation for selecting "insiders" over those with more experience, they also believed that, in this case, knowledge of the district—its history and issues—provided a benefit with regard to maintaining the momentum around current district changes. The unanimous vote by the selection committee combined with the support of Dr. Chambers, who noted that her experience as a personnel director would allow her to mentor Jon, swayed the board. Jon was hired as the new personnel director for the district on the last Friday of the school year. He began his role as the new personnel director the following Monday. Given the timing of the personnel director's appointment, the district appointed Jon's assistant principal as the new middle school principal, and the school's counselor was appointed as the assistant principal.

At the end of his first week, Jon was sent to a week-long, national training session on personnel and human resource management. The training focused on the impact of policy, legislation, federal protection acts, and case law around employee job actions as well as proven strategies on recruitment and retention, employee evaluations, salary structures, and employee benefits. The training seminar was an awakening for Jon. In particular, he became keenly aware of the complexity of human resource issues and how quickly situations can become issues. For instance, a letter

of reprimand becomes a countersuit of harassment, a job termination for insubordination and failure to perform duties becomes a countersuit for civil rights violations, or efforts to negotiate an agreement to increase teacher compensation becomes a walkout of all teachers who belong to the union.

Upon his return, Jon began a review of district human resource policies and preparing for the onset of the new school year. Dr. Chambers also informed Jon of their weekly meetings on Friday at 4:00. In these meetings, Dr. Chambers explained that she would review situations that occurred when she was a personnel director as well as discuss actions taken, conversations, letters, and disciplinary scenarios to prepare Job to manage personnel issues for the school district.

These discussions also provided time for Jon and Dr. Chambers to plan in-service training for district administrators on corrective disciplinary procedures. These discussions and development of a presentation continued throughout the summer. During the week that Dr. Chambers and Jon were putting some of the final touches on their presentation (see appendix), the State Department of Education announced the upcoming release of a State Professional Practices Commission summary report on job actions against licensed school employees. Jon and Dr. Chambers decided that the presentation on corrective discipline would be a good follow-up to the report. They decided to present the information at the first administrative meeting in August, immediately following the release of the state.

The State Report

The state-level report summarizing the State Professional Practices Commission (SPPC) actions was released the first week in August. The information had been compiled from job actions taken by the commission since 1985, which is when the commission began keeping records. During the past 22 years there had been 444 suspensions and revocations of licenses by the State Board of Education whose actions are guided by the SPPC (see Table 1). Of the 444 actions taken by the state, 35.1% were for inappropriate sexual behavior with students and 22.1% were for unprofessional conduct based on inappropriate relationships formed with students.

According to the commission report, the third leading cause for job actions overall in the state was inappropriate use of the Internet, primarily due to downloading or storing internet pornography or using the Internet to entice minors into a relationship. However, all 58 of the these job actions had taken place since 1999, making inappropriate use of the Internet the second leading cause for job actions over the previous 8 years. According to the State Board of Education attorney, approximately 100 cases were reviewed each year with between 6 and 30 certificated staff losing their licenses annually. Alexandra School District was cited as the only district yet to have a referral to the SPPC since they began keeping data on teacher suspensions and revocations in 1985.

Table 1
State Revocations and Suspensions: 1985-2007

| Behavior | Number Reported | Percent |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| Inappropriate sexual behavior w/students | 156 | 35.1 |
| Unprofessional conduct involving students | 98 | 22.1 |
| Internet violation | 58 | 13.1 |
| Drug/alcohol offense | 41 | 9.5 |
| Misuse of public funds | 16 | 3.6 |
| Theft | 12 | 2.7 |
| Miscellaneous other | 62 | 14.0 |
| Total | 444 | 100 |

Case Analysis Questions

Section 2

1. What *process* is used in your district to hire and/or place building administrators? In what ways is the process open (e.g., positions are posted and advertised) and closed (e.g., positions are assigned from current employees or a pool of candidates)? What are the hiring *practices* in your district for teaching and administrative positions? What are district *policies* regarding hiring persons for teaching and administrative positions? How does your district ensure fair hiring practices?
2. What are the implications of moving personnel into administrative positions versus utilizing an open-search project?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of your district's hiring process, practices, and policies?
4. Contact your state department of education and/or professional practices commission. What type of information is available as a part of the public record regarding suspensions or revocations of teacher and administrative licenses? For what offenses are teachers and administrator licenses revoked for most often? How does this vary by locations within the state? Using Table 1, what has been the number of reported cases across categories for the past 10 years in your state?
5. In your own district, how have professional misconduct cases been addressed and/or resolved? Under what circumstances did the information become public? What position have districts taken publicly when these cases are publicized (e.g., proactive, defensive, investigations)?

Heading Upstream

As soon as the commission report was released, Superintendent Chambers responded publicly. Although she acknowledged that Alexandra School District had

no incidences reported, she emphasized that her hope was that any previous disciplinary issues had been handled appropriately at the school level. She also alluded to the district's efforts to address internal and community concerns regarding professional practices, particularly given what may have been lapses in reporting 3 years ago. Dr. Chambers had learned during the previous 6 months that principals had become loathe to try and discipline teachers with no support from Mr. McLaughlin, the district personnel director. She suspected that complaints filed made it as far as Mr. McLaughlin's desk, but ended there. Given Dr. Chamber's discoveries and recent events (those founded and rumored), developing a response plan from Jon Robertson and the personnel department for disciplinary action was necessary and a clear and concise process for informing the SPPC when appropriate were priorities from this point forward.

Getting Your Feet Wet

During the first 2 weeks of school, a Fairview High School teacher who also served as the soccer coach got into a screaming match with one of the previous players and a parent. The confrontation occurred over the player being cut from the varsity team. The player, who was entering her senior year, was displaced due to an influx of very talented sophomore players. According to bystanders, the coach repeatedly tried to convince the parent that the player was cut in the interest of building and maintaining a strong team.

Eager to demonstrate the district's commitment to not sweep reports under the carpet, Jon felt that he should lead the investigation of this incident. However, Dr. Chambers explained that an investigation of this particular type of incident was the responsibility of the building principal and athletic director first. Instead, she clarified that consistent with current policy, Jon's role was to support the administrators and remain impartial to verify that the investigation is fair and complete. Dr. Chambers pointed out that there were two advantages to the principal and/or athletic director being the investigator(s). First, addressing the situation by those closest to the situation would establish administrator responsibility for investigating questionable actions of the employees they supervise. Second, initiating the investigation at the school level provides an avenue for an appeal. An appeal would be available for the parents and for the coach in the event that either sought additional input or resolution regarding the outcome of the investigation.

The initial investigation by the principal included interviews with the coach, the parents, and the player who had been cut from the team. Two other team members and parents who had witnessed the confrontation were also interviewed. The accounts were similar: The parents approached the coach, requested an explanation, the coach explains, the parents demand the player be returned to the team, the coach refuses, coach begins to walk off, and parent follows. What differed in the accounts was the

degree of emotional charge attached to each stage of the confrontation. In the end, the coach's decision to cut the player was deemed appropriate. The yelling was deemed unprofessional. The principal suggested the coach be given a verbal warning with documentation of the incident in the coach's file and provide an apology for raising his voice. Though everyone recognized that the apology may be perceived as trite, it was indicative of the district's commitment to responsibility and accountability.

The Administrators Meeting: Opening up the Dialogue

On the fourth Monday in August, the superintendent discussed the state report with all of the school principals, assistant principals, and district leadership. For the veteran administrators, the data in the report and subsequent fallout were not surprising. Following the discussion on the commission report, the superintendent presented the district's *Corrective Discipline: An Overview of Effective Employee Discipline* document. It was a long, thorough presentation, filled with examples of inappropriate employee behavior and responses drawn primarily from Dr. Chambers' previous experiences as a building administrator, assistant personnel director, and personnel director. Jon was not only very pleased with the presentation but also very impressed at how Dr. Chambers had moved through the presentation so flawlessly.

The response by principals was indicative of how well the information was received. Almost immediately, the discussion leapt to the lack of follow-through on the process by the former personnel director. They also expressed frustration that they were unable to garner district support for actions to correct poor teacher behavior. The principals had been in place for a much shorter period of time than the previous personnel director and Mr. McLaughlin apparently made it obvious that his connections and relationships with veteran employees overrode his support of the administrators attempting to address disciplinary issues. From Dr. Chambers' and Jon's perspective, the reflections of administrators and supervisors on issues with the past was an important step in understanding how to support them in future situations.

A turning point in the meeting occurred when the Fairview High School principal shared the story of the coach who had been reported for yelling at a parent and the district's support of the principal to resolve the issue. An elementary principal explained sarcastically that in the past the previous personnel director would most likely have called the coach to congratulate him for having the guts to stand up to a couple of whiney parents. Laughter and nods of agreement followed that comment.

Case Analysis Questions

Section 3

1. In your district, what are the policies or administrative rules that specifically outline the code of conduct or behavioral expectations for employees? What are

- the stipulations for coaches, particularly with regard to practices or athletic competitions?
2. Most often coaches are considered at-will employees. What does this mean and how does it impact a disciplinary process for someone in a coaching position who is also a teacher in the district? What are the implications when coaches and/or advisors for student clubs and activities are not teachers in the district?
 3. According to state statute and district policy, under what circumstances can an employee's contract be terminated in your district/state?
 4. Given the culture of Alexandra School District, how could the district begin to rebuild trust among its administrative core as well as with the public?
 5. How does this district determine the extent to which professional practices need to be addressed? Who should be involved? How does the district proceed in a way that garners public support without drawing a media storm that negatively exposes the district? How does this compare to your own district's process?

I Have a Story to Tell . . . If Someone Would Just Ask

Early in September, Jon Robertson had an indication that attitudes might be changing about employee discipline. Mary Johnson, who was one of the district's principals, made an appearance in Jon's office. She came to report a situation that she felt could finally be addressed. It was the Friday afternoon following the presentation on discipline. She wanted to meet to talk about Le Mar Powers. Jon had a sense that this was the time Superintendent Chambers had warned him about in those earlier meetings.

Le Mar Powers: Teacher and Coach Extraordinaire

Le Mar Powers was an icon in the school district as both an extraordinary math teacher and coach. Students, parents, and community members alike knew of his passion for teaching and coaching. In addition to producing an inordinate number of math scholars over his career, he consistently set the bar statewide for the number of students who took and passed the AP Calculus test. Mr. Powers had been recognized as the most outstanding teacher in the state. He had served on the district's math initiative and vertical alignment committees and had worked with the State Department of Education when the math curriculum was last rewritten.

Though his performance as a teacher was outstanding, his reputation as a coach in girls' basketball was also becoming legendary. He was an intensely focused coach with a farm system, of sorts, which stretched down into the local grade school county recreation leagues. For many of the players, the recreation leagues were *the* pipeline in preparation for an opportunity to play high school basketball for Le Mar. In 15 years as a head coach, Alexandra High School had won 11 regional and 7 state championships. The past spring Alexandra High School won its third consecutive state title.

Mary began by talking about the impact that the state report and the training on school discipline had on her. She said that she had been reflecting on an event that happened almost 12 years ago when she was an assistant principal at one of the middle schools. She had followed the high school girls' team as it began to develop under Le Mar as head coach. She had never seen someone as intensely focused on every detail of the game and able to break down every facet of offense, defense, and fundamentals in a way that made sense to his players. He was fiery in his support, she explained, but never yelled at his players, and his players were incredibly loyal to Le Mar.

In his first year as coach, Le Mar started to establish the practice of naming two captains for the basketball team—one senior and one junior. His senior captain that first year was a former student at Mary's middle school. As a rule, Le Mar expected the cocaptains to spend extra time reviewing film, helping younger players, and working as summer basketball camp counselors. Mary recounted that she had unease about Le Mar and his cocaptains, in particular those who served as the senior captain. During the year that her former student, Patrice, was the senior captain; Mary recalled seeing them together several times, always with another coach or the other cocaptain present, but there was something about the way they interacted that made her uncomfortable. It was just a feeling that they sat a little closer to each other than necessary and that they laughed a little too often when together as if sharing jokes that no one else was privy to.

Jon interjected, "Mary perhaps you are simply too sensitive." Seeing Mary's expression, Jon apologized for his own insensitivity. He explained that Le Mar had been a friend and mentor early in his career. Not only had they worked together at the same high school for over a decade, Jon had actually been the assistant girls coach for 4 years, including during two of the state championship seasons. He quickly added, "While I knew a situation like this would be brought to me sooner or later, I didn't expect it to be so soon or so personally close. I realize that this type of report has been swept under the rug in the past, please continue."

Mary continued and explained that late one spring on her way home Mary saw Patrice and Le Mar in his car together. This was a clear violation of district policy, unless the situation was approved by the building administrator. The next day Mary confronted Le Mar about the situation. Le Mar assured her that the issue was one where Patrice's parents were not available and she could not find a ride home and he, without considering possible consequences, simply gave her a ride. When Mary spoke with Patrice, she told the same story. Mary also asked Patrice point blank if anything was going on with regard to an inappropriate relationship. Patrice blushed and seemed embarrassed by the question but quietly and confidently told her that nothing was going on. Mary said she accepted the explanation and did not report it to anyone. Later that summer while Mary was out with friends on the other side of town, she thought she saw Le Mar and Patrice walking into a deli together. Because Patrice had graduated and was heading out of state to college, Mary decided not to

pursue the incident further. Mary added that since that time she had occasionally heard rumors of Le Mar's attention to certain players.

Jon and Mary discussed the implications of their conversation, including pursuing an investigation. They recognized that this investigation would essentially be the test case for the district's new policies and practices regarding effective employee discipline.

As Mary left the office, Jon recalled a situation during his third year as assistant coach. He had briefly wondered about the closeness he perceived between Le Mar and a senior student. When he had questioned Le Mar about why the student continuously hung out, Le Mar had noted that she had a crush on him. Jon also began thinking about Le Mar's practice of inviting the senior captain to the team camp at Western State College following their senior season to work as an assistant coach. This tradition was framed as a reward for the captains for their previous dedication to the program. Now, even this practice was suspect.

Jon opened his door and headed down the hallway toward Dr. Chambers' office. He already had a plan for the investigation, which he would share with Dr. Chambers. Naturally, it was Friday afternoon and once again Jon and Teri were locked into an intense conversation. Dr. Chambers agreed that the information could not be ignored, but that the approach to this investigation needed to be handled cautiously. The ramifications for students and the community of any information about Le Mar Powers becoming public prior to having a complete investigation, including an opportunity for Le Mar to be made aware of the allegations, could be devastating.

The Investigation

During the September school board meeting in closed session, Dr. Chambers informed the board that an investigation was underway regarding an employee. In the meantime, Jon was to do two initial contacts to determine whether there might be sufficient evidence to pursue a full investigation. The first phone call would be to Patrice. The second call would be to the former player who was a team captain during Jon's third year as the assistant coach. Her name was Jordan; she was the daughter of one of the current school board members. Ironically, it was a board member who had been opposed to Jon's hiring.

These conversations, which were scripted, would begin by Jon stating that information that required investigation had been brought to the district's attention. He would inform the prior students/players that the information was confidential, but could be used to pursue legal action, which, depending on the nature of the full investigation, may not guarantee complete anonymity. He also would explain that the former student/athletes were under no obligation to participate in this investigation.

The investigation plan also required that if any concerns about Le Mar's behavior were brought forth and substantiated by the first two phone calls, then other senior captains from the last 15 years would be contacted as well. Subsequently, statements,

interviews, and any evidence would be compiled and presented to Le Mar in a meeting with his direct supervisor, the high school principal and others as deemed appropriate. The allegations would be presented so that Le Mar would have an opportunity to hear what information had been brought forward and respond to those allegations. Once he had an opportunity to respond, an additional investigation, including interviewing other faculty and staff, would be conducted. All evidence from the investigation would be considered prior to any recommendations to the school board for action.

As Jon initiated the first phone call, there were so many things going through his mind. Shouldn't he have started by touching base with Le Mar? Should he ask Mary if her intent was for him to look into the situation? When he talked to Patrice, would she agree not to speak about this with Le Mar during the investigation? If so, and if there was nothing to the investigation, could there be some fallout if Le Mar found out about the call? What would the board think if the first serious issue he had chosen to pursue blew up in his face? How would it make the superintendent look? What if there was credence to the concerns—then what? How could he sit across from one of his mentors and tell him that he was under investigation?

As the phone was ringing, Jon's mind raced trying to think of ways to keep his voice calm. On the fifth ring, a female voice picked up. He asked to speak to Patrice. The voice replied, "This is she. Who is this?" Jon responded and Patrice immediately recognized Jon's name as she had followed Alexandra's basketball program even though she had moved out of state 6 years earlier. She asked next, "Why are you calling?" Jon explained that he was now the district's personnel director and was calling about some concerns about Le Mar Powers that had recently been brought to his attention. In particular, there were concerns about the relationships between Le Mar and his team captains. There was a long, pregnant pause. Even over the phone, Jon was aware that Patrice had begun to cry.

"I'm sorry if I upset you by this call," Jon said sincerely. "Are you comfortable continuing?" Jon worried that she might hang up at this point. First Patrice said, "I have been waiting a long time for someone to ask me about this." Then she added, "I can't say I'm comfortable continuing, but I'm willing to answer your questions. Who came to you with the concern?" Jon had not been prepared for this question; he hesitated and stumbled to defer attention away from Mary as the source. "I can't really share that information at this point. I can tell you that it was a district employee."

Jon made a decision to come straight to the point. "Patrice, again, I'm sorry to be so direct, but did you have a close personal or romantic relationship with Mr. Powers when you were a student/athlete at Alexandra High School?" There was another long pause. "Well, sort of," she responded. "We spent a lot of time together, almost always with others around. But when we were by ourselves, we'd talk about personal things like what I did on weekends, who I was hanging out with, and eventually how much we liked each other."

Jon literally began to perspire. He asked her if she would like to continue, and explained that he was taking notes. Patrice continued, "One time he gave me a ride

home in the spring of my senior year. I'd stayed late to watch films and my folks were out of town. When we got to my house, we kind of had this weird, awkward kiss—it was so embarrassing.” Jon pursued the situation by asking “Was that the extent of the physical contact?” Patrice paused, “Well sort of” she said again. “We didn’t ‘do’ anything although we’d share a look or sit a little closer together than we needed to, and we talked on a very personal level about understanding that nothing could happen between us, at least until after I graduated.”

Jon’s heart sank further as he felt he knew what was coming. “What happened after graduation?” Well, Patrice responded, “I guess you could say we had an affair. When we were at camp at Western State, I had my own dorm room and Le Mar was staying at a motel just off campus. Two of the nights we were there, I snuck out and went to his room. It was his idea and we . . . well, we . . . um . . . we slept together.”

Patrice went on to say that for some unknown reason, she had kept the key to the motel room and could produce it, if needed. She then stated that they had had one other rendezvous later in the summer. He had a friend who loaned him his condo across town while he was out of the country. After that day together, Le Mar “broke it off” saying that it was just too risky for them to see each other in such a small town. From the last statement about the relationship being “too risky,” Jon determined that Le Mar knew what he and Patrice were doing was wrong.

Jon was now beyond disappointed and had to control his own emotions hearing these accusations about his colleague, mentor, and friend. “Patrice,” he said intensely, “Are you willing to provide this information in writing with a signature?” Without hesitation, she said, “Absolutely.” Jon followed, “May I ask why?” What followed startled him. She explained,

I’ll do it because he took advantage of me. After being hurt for awhile I got angry. Over time, another thing I found out is that I’m not the only one that this has happened to. I know about other girls he’s done the same thing to and someone needs to stop him. I’ve even talked to some of them . . . and, I’ll give you their names.

It took almost 2 months to gather information from different team captains about what may or may not have happened. Each team captain was informed that the questions were part of a confidential investigation. Though a majority of the former student athletes reported that there were no inappropriate advances by Le Mar, three other captains reported that they had developed a relationship of sorts with him while he was coach, including sharing at least one time where there had been physical contact and Le Mar noting that it was “too risky to start a relationship before they had graduated.” In each instance, the intimate part of their relationships began after they had graduated and after they had turned 18.

Throughout the process, Jon had frequent contacts with the school district attorney and met at least twice per week with the superintendent to keep her apprised of

the progress of the investigation. Jon, Dr. Chambers, and the attorney were acutely aware of the ramifications of the investigation and the possible job action against Le Mar Powers.

The Face-to-Face Meeting With Le Mar

Once the last of the statements from the former student/athletes were received and compiled into the summary of the concerns, a meeting with Le Mar was set to present him with the allegations in full and give him an opportunity to respond. The question due to the time lapse from the actual events prompted a discussion of options about who should be involved in the meeting. Even though the current high school principal was not Le Mar's supervisor during the time of any of the alleged relationships, it was decided that he would be involved in the meeting. The athletic director would also attend the meeting. Due to the possibility that the actions, if substantiated, could result in termination of Le Mar's contract, the discussion of whether to include Dr. Chambers in the initial meeting went back and forth. A day before the meeting, Jon and Dr. Chambers agreed that she would not attend. At the end of the second week of November, on Friday the 13th, a meeting was scheduled with Le Mar in the high school conference room. At 2:45 p.m. sharp, Le Mar walked into the conference room.

Jon's hands were sweating and there was a slight tremble in his voice as he explained that the district was obligated to investigate any allegations of inappropriate behavior between teachers/coaches and students. Le Mar quickly asked what this had to do with him. Jon explained that based on concerns that had been brought to the attention of the personnel department an investigation had been conducted based on his relationships with former basketball players. He further clarified that the current meeting was an opportunity for Le Mar to hear and receive the allegations in writing and to respond to those allegation. As the investigation was ongoing, Le Mar was informed to not approach any current or former players about the statements nor attempt to determine the identity of the individuals who provided the information. No action was being taken at this time, but this was an opportunity to answer questions about the allegations and he would have until Wednesday, November 18th, to respond in writing. As the girls' basketball season was underway, Le Mar was also instructed by his principal not to meet with any of his captains or other players without the junior varsity or sophomore coach being present.

While the concerns were presented in writing and verbally, Jon did his best to maintain direct eye contact. As the information continued, Le Mar looked directly at Jon, his jaw clenched, his skin turning red, and his eyes staring forward. As Jon finished his comments, Le Mar grabbed the papers on the desk and stood up from his chair. Ever so slowly he looked at Jon, the athletic director, and then the principal and said seething with rage, "I have only one question and one comment. Jon, how in God's name could you do this to me after all that we have been through?" The he

hissed, "You know this is all a bunch of crap and you can all go to hell!" He then turned around and walked out of the office.

Le Mar's defiance lasted over the weekend, but he responded in writing cryptically stating that none of the events ever took place and that a conspiracy had been hatched against him by former players.

Conclusion

Unfortunately for Le Mar, his former players kept mementos, including notes and cards, and many of those had his signature or initials. After reviewing Le Mar's letter and in consultation with the attorney and the superintendent, the recommendation was to terminate Le Mar's contract for cause based on unprofessional behavior. Additionally, he was suspended without pay and removed as the girls' basketball coach pending a board hearing. In a first for Alexandra School District, the case was also referred to the State Professional Practices Commission so that they could conduct their own investigation of the events in question.

Le Mar went public with the case and once again the district was divided. The west side of the district was unsympathetic. The east side of the district was torn. Students, teachers, parents, and community members who believed the district was finally taking responsibility for the actions of district personnel were on one side. Conversely, other current and former Alexandra players, parents, and many teachers at the high school were livid about the recommendation to terminate Le Mar, and even more furious that he had been dismissed as coach just as the season was getting underway. His supporters could not imagine one of their prize teachers and coaches being involved in relationships with multiple students over the years. Under the barrage of patron outrage and media coverage, Dr. Chambers and Jon Robertson could only say the current recommended disciplinary action was one that would be reviewed by the school board. The recommendation would either be upheld or altered, but it was in the hands of the board.

Due to the winter holiday and requests from the attorneys to have time to prepare for the hearing, the board did not meet to hear the full case until mid-January. In a hearing that was closed to the public, several teachers and former players testified on Powers' behalf, but the former players who testified about the relationships were most convincing. When Patrice, who came back to Alexandra for the hearing, actually produced a room key with the hotel name on it where she and Le Mar had met, any question about the outcome of the hearing was clearly over.

After a short deliberation, the school board, in a 5-to-2 vote, upheld the recommendation to terminate the contract. Le Mar announced his immediate plans to pursue the matter with further legal action against the school district for wrongful termination. His claim would be that the district had acted too harshly since each of the girls was over 18 and were no longer students of the district. Letters of support

for Le Mar and condemnation for the school board, the superintendent, Jon, the process of investigation, and decision making arrived daily. In a press briefing, Dr. Chambers lamented that a lengthy court case with such a public figure was not something anyone involved would look forward to. She added,

Instances such as this are rare. However, they should be non-existent. Educators and persons who have the responsibility for the care and development of children must take that responsibility seriously. When ethics and professional practices are violated, when students are violated, harassed, or coerced, then the district and the leadership of this district too have a responsibility to ensure that these situations are resolved. Students come to our district schools to be educated in ways that open opportunities for them to pursue their dreams, their talents, and their abilities. As a district, we will do all we can to ensure that these pursuits are unencumbered in the classroom, on the court or field, or postgraduation.

Two weeks after the school board meeting, the SPPC board met to review the case and Le Mar was provided an opportunity to meet with the state commission based on their own investigation and findings. The individuals on the SPPC included teacher representatives, currently employed and retired principals, current and former superintendents, at-large community members, and attorneys representing the State Department of Education. Five days after the hearing, Mr. Powers' teaching license was revoked permanently. In their final report, the commission noted that he was fired for unprofessional conduct, including using his position of authority to establish inappropriate relationships with students and for a pattern of establishing sexual relationships with former student athletes. As the commission supported the district's decision, the union attorney advised Le Mar that further legal action against the district would be fruitless. Without a teaching license, even if a court overturned the district's decision, he would not be able to return to teaching. The SPPC's revocation and cause for action, which are public documents, were retrieved and published by the local newspapers. The letters from the public subsided almost immediately.

Case Analysis Questions

Section 4

1. How do we ensure students in schools are not subjected to harassment, verbal, physical and/or sexual abuse? What policies and practices (formal and informal) are necessary to support these efforts? What is the district responsibility to students when situations such as the one described in this case occur?
2. Employees have guaranteed rights. Some based on local policy and practice, other based on state and/or federal legislation and litigation. Under what conditions

- would the following employee rights need to be considered and which of these are applicable to this case
- a. Property Rights
 - b. Expectations of Continued Employment
 - c. Career (tenured) Status
 - d. Due Process
 - e. The Americans with Disabilities Act
 - f. The Family Medical Leave Act
 - g. Long Term Disability
 - h. Title IX, Sexual Harassment Guidance (American Association of University Women, 2001; Bogart & Stein, 1987)
3. Review the outline on employee discipline in appendix. To what degree were the districts procedures followed during the investigation into the allegations against Le Mar Powers? How would your district have handled this investigation?
 4. How does your district provide support and avenues for students, faculty, staff, or others to report incidences in your own district? How often does this occur and what are the circumstances of reporting, investigation, and action?
 5. As a building administrator, at what point does an incident rise to the level of requiring an investigation and/or escalating the issue to district administrators? What responsibility does the principal, district administrator, and board have in an investigation? What are the policies and practices in your own district?
 6. How has your own school/district weathered cases such as this? As a principal or district leader, what are the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics that must be dealt with in these situations and after the situations are resolved?
 7. What are the ethical and political considerations when pursuing an investigation on faculty misconduct?

Teaching Notes

This case, which was inspired by actual events, describes the efforts of a district to create a culture of accountability for professional employee practice and behavior. In the midst of new district leaders and a shift in district priorities, numerous situations test the fortitude, organizational knowledge, ethical commitments, and political prowess of the district leadership. As the case unfolds, there are opportunities for students in an educational leadership preparation program to explore the political, legal, ethical, and organizational change dimensions of district leadership, particularly around areas of human resource and supervision. In doing so, the case illustrates the importance of inter- and intra-personal dynamics of leadership, particularly leadership during transition (Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk, 2003).

Leadership, planning, adequate policy development and implementation, evaluation of practices, and reflection help district leaders (e.g., principals, district administrators, board members) anticipate, understand, and respond to situations such as educator misconduct. While all situations cannot be anticipated nor consequences

foreseeable, adequate responses can be a determining factor in whether or not an issue can be resolved in a manner that has a minimal impact on district operations, teaching, and learning. Moreover, as demonstrated in this case, adequate responses can contribute to the political survival of a principal, superintendency, or board.

The district in this case has a long history of ignoring and avoiding situations such as educator misconduct, as described herein. In many instances, practices in the district favored relationships at the expense of professional and ethical practices. As a result, splintering occurred within the community and among district personnel. This case illustrates how restored and revised practices and policies, even those aimed at increasing achievement, improving professional practices, taking on the old guard and disciplining a person considered to be an icon by many, can be a challenge. In part, a combination of new personnel, current conflicts, lack of trust, and resistance to, and unease with, change contribute to this challenge.

Again, to effectively address this case, students must utilize their knowledge and understanding of educator misconduct (Shakeshaft, 2004) and concepts related to education law and policy, ethics, politics of leadership and decision making, and the politics of change (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 2003; LaMorte, 2008; Fowler, 2008; Owen, 2006; Webb & Norton, 2003). Questions are embedded after each section to provide students an opportunity to analyze the case; synthesize information to extend the current analysis and the case's applicability to the student's current school, district, or state context, and compare, contrast, and evaluate the case and their own districts.

The legal aspects of policy development, investigations, and discipline, for instance, are critical for leaders to understand because they will be presented with challenging situations that will require some type of administrative or disciplinary response. The response might be as casual as a brief conversation, but could rise to the termination of an employee's contract. A certain level of knowledge about individual rights, school law and policy, and how to access resources is expected. Thus, in addition to the areas of inquiry provided within the case, this case may be used to explore other legal issues such as the Fourth Amendment, Fifth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment, Due Process Clause, Probable Cause, The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Communications Decency Act of 1996, and court cases like *Gary Leventhal v. Lawrence Knapek*.

Educational leadership professors may also choose to utilize Begley's (2005, as cited in Begley and Stefkovich, 2007) *Value Audit Guideline* as a means of analyzing this case and the situations encountered by the human resource director from an ethical perspective (Leonard, 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001). Begley's *Value Audit Guideline* permits a case to be analyzed through three steps, including interpretation of the problem (ethic of critique), toward a humane response (ethic of care), and ethical action (ethic of justice).

Finally, this case has inter- and intra-personal issues for consideration. While the focus for this case is not the presence or absence of interpersonal skills, it does address the interpersonal costs that can occur when difficult disciplinary issues arise

and the intrapersonal struggles associated with disciplinary issues that involve colleagues, particularly those who are considered friends and mentors. To develop inter- and intra-personal skills further, case facilitators may choose to have class participants role-play interactions such as those in this case and do 360° evaluations.

Appendix

Corrective Discipline: An Overview of Effective Employee Discipline

- I. The role of the principal and other supervisors: "To Represent the Board of Education"
 - a. Providing leadership for teaching and learning
 - b. Providing support at district, building, and classroom level
 - c. Solving problems
 - d. Correcting mistakes: "Failure to correct bad behavior is to condone bad behavior"
 - II. The nature of corrective discipline (objective is to remediate problem behaviors)
 - a. Corrective not punitive
 - b. Progressive not explosive
 - c. Clear not vague
 - d. Based on facts not assumptions
 - e. Predictable not arbitrary
 - f. Civil not combative
 - III. The components of corrective discipline
 - a. Foundation—law
 - i. Statute and board policies
 - ii. Regulations and school policy
 - iii. Administrative guidelines and directives
 - iv. Just cause—reason to show harm
 - v. Due process—protection of individual rights
 - vi. Disciplinary action
 1. Verbal warning
 2. Written directive
 3. Written reprimand
 4. Suspension with pay
 5. Suspension without pay
 6. Termination
 - IV. Investigation
 - a. Investigate first
 - b. Fair—include the employee and others suggested by the employee
 - c. Complete—gather evidence, witness statements, documents, and so on.
 - d. Take notes—date, time, place, facts, witnesses
 - e. Written response—when appropriate, obtain a written response
 - f. Just cause
 - i. Improper conduct
 - ii. Neglect of duty
-

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

- iii. Insubordination
 - iv. Failure to perform duties properly
 - v. Excessive absenteeism
 - vi. Incapacity due to mental or physical disability
- V. Due process
- a. Was the rule, procedure, or directive known to the employee?
 - b. Was the rule procedure or directive reasonably related to the orderly, efficient, and safe operation of the school?
 - c. Was the employee aware or warned of probable disciplinary consequences?
 - d. Was there an objective, fair investigation of the facts?
 - e. Was there valid, objective, and substantial evidence of wrongdoing?
 - f. Did the corrective action fit the violation (i.e., was it reasonable?)
 - g. Was the previous record of the employee taken into account?
 - h. Was the treatment of this problem consistent with treatment of other similar cases?
 - i. Progressive sequence
 - i. Post, provide, create an awareness and review pertinent rules
 - ii. Keep personal notes
 - iii. Give verbal notice
 - iv. Give verbal warning
 - v. Give written directive
 - vi. Provide opportunity and support toward improved behavior
 - vii. Provide written reprimand (if no improvement)
 - viii. Recommend additional disciplinary action
 - 1. Suspension with pay
 - 2. Suspension without pay
 - 3. Termination
- VI. Prevention
- a. Provide balance of support
 - b. Post expectations
 - i. Statutory laws and regulation
 - ii. Board policies
 - iii. School policies
 - iv. Professional agreement
 - c. Check for access to expectations
 - d. Clear, continuous communication
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Note

1. The work of Gabris (2004) and Yin (2005) provided guidance for the construction of this case. Gabris (2004) suggested developing stories based on actual events in public administration to inform graduate and undergraduate students about the theory and practice praxis. These cases, which are data-rich, provide a vicarious experience for students who may not have professional or experiential knowledge. Yin's (2005) methodological guidance for case studies that are illustrative of current practice in education also provided assistance in developing this case. This case is a compilation of a review of job actions recorded over a 15 year period from a state level professional practices committee and draws on

author professional experiences as principals and district administrators. As such, while this case is inspired by actual events, certain details have been changed to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of persons and events involved.

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Tim J. McConnell is the director of human resources and student assessment for Park City School District in Park City, Utah. As a career public educator Tim has been a teacher, teacher trainer, and worked for the Utah State Office of Education as a program specialist in Special Education. He received a doctorate of education in educational leadership and policy studies from the University of Utah in 2007.

Andrea K. Rorrer is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and director of the Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah. Andrea's district and policy research has been published in *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *Theory into Practice*, *Educational Policy*, *the Journal of Educational Policy*, and the *UCEA Review*, among other publications. She coedited with Catherine Lugg the 2006 Politics of Education Yearbook, "*Power, Education, and the Politics of Social Justice*."